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Sketch

A
SKETCH
OF THE
STATE OF IRELAND,
PAST AND PRESENT.

Imperaturus es hominibus, qui nec totam servitutem pati possunt,
nec totam libertatem. TACIT. Hist. i. 16.

EIGHTH EDITION.

DUBLIN:

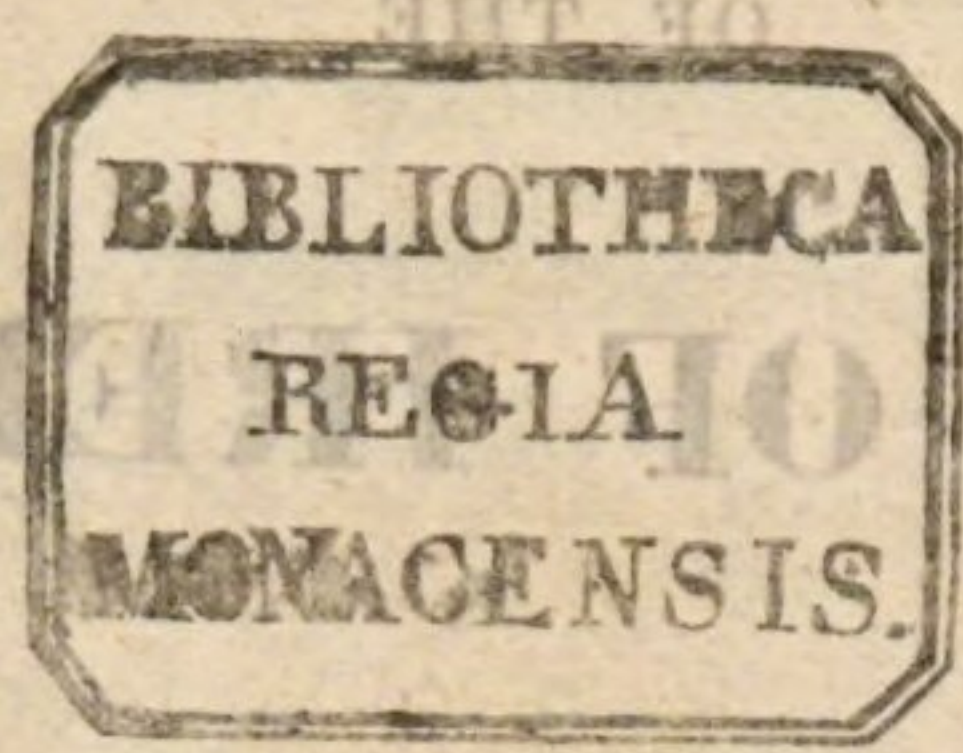
M. N. MAHON, 116, GRAFTON-STREET.

1822.

401. 85.

A

SKETCH



PAST AND PRESENT.

Imperatoris et hominibus qui nec totam civitatem possunt
Tacti. Hist. 16. nec totam libertatem.

RIGHTS EDITION.

DUBLIN:

M. N. MAHON, 116, GRAFTON-STREET.

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1832.

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TO

THIS EDITION.

THE Reader is requested to observe that the following pages were written in 1807, and published in the beginning of 1808. The corrections that have been since made, are *verbal* or *explanatory*. No *substantial* alteration has been thought *necessary*.

Dec. 20th, 1821.

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Dec. 20th 1821.

TO
THE MOST NOBLE
THE MARQUIS WELLESLEY,

LORD LIEUTENANT GENERAL AND GENERAL GOVERNOR OF
IRELAND,

&c. &c. &c.

MY LORD,

I REQUEST you to peruse the following pages. Our sentiments probably may not, in every instance, accord; but I trust I shall convince your Lordship, that the state of Ireland not only deserves your attention, but imperiously calls upon you, as a Statesman and an Irishman, to exert your great and increasing influence in her cause; hitherto so constantly mismanaged and so often betrayed.

* * *

TO
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...

A

SKETCH

OF THE

STATE OF IRELAND,

PAST AND PRESENT.

I. **AN** author ambitious of fame should write the history of transactions that are past, and of men that are no more ; desirous of profit, he should seek it from the prejudiced liberality of a party : but he whose object is his country, must hope for neither ; and, shrouded in disinterested obscurity, should speak of sects and factions not what they desire, but what they deserve, to hear : to his impartiality, his own times should be as those of Charles or James ; and the ministers, bigots, and demagogues of his day, as Laud or Prynne, as Fitton, Hamilton, or Tyrconnell.

Object of
the work.

B

And this style of writing—least popular, least profitable—is at all times the most difficult, and in bad times the most dangerous : power, always quick in revenge, is quickest in reaching its literary opponents ; and the populace is never more slanderous than in arraigning the motives of him who would curb their violence.

Its difficulties.

II. These disadvantages, great every where, are in Ireland oppressive ; where impartiality seldom thinks, and never writes : party the only distinction, passion the only incitement ; where the faction in and the faction out, *Orangemen* and *Defenders*, coercers and revolutionists, the English administration and the Irish directory, have divided between them the press and the nation.

I am therefore aware that my undertaking is a rash and imprudent *novelty*, attractive neither of the light nor of the grave, of this junto or that. To speak what I feel,—to tell what I see,—to sketch with a true but transient pencil, the state of Ireland, and, in considering the evils and the remedies, to deliver an unbought and unbigoted opinion on the measure of *Catholic emancipation* : to doubt whether I shall be heard ; to be assured

that, if heard, I shall offend ; to do my duty, without hope, but not without fear ;—those are my objects, this my situation ;—the inevitable fate of contemporary truth.

III. From the date of the English establish-^{English conquest imperfect.}ment in Ireland, first effected, afterwards extended, finally secured, by domestic treachery and 1169. the foreign sword, there was, till the last century, no civil government. The king's deputies, and the deputies of the deputies, were strangers and soldiers, needy and tyrannical ; their duty, conquest ; their reward, plunder ; their residence, an encampment ; their administration, a campaign ! The Capital and a small neighbourhood, emphatically called the ENGLISH PALE, acknowledged theoretic existence, but enjoyed not the practical benefit of laws. As the superior arms or arts of the settlers changed turbulent neighbours into rebellious subjects, the PALE was enlarged, but they had no laws to dispense, no civilisation to communicate. I will not wade through the blood of a continual rebellion and intermittent massacres, nor through recriminations nearly as odious, and retaliations quite as bloody. Prized should the land be, every foot of which has been fought ;

and fertile the country manured by the indiscriminate slaughter of her sons and her step-sons ! Suffice it to say, the riotous discontent of the half-subdued drew down the suspicious severity of the half-established, and this protracted and barbarous struggle effected by degrees the degradation of both.

State of
Ireland at
the Revolution.

IV. I pass over the alternate ravages of Charles and Cromwell, to arrive at the almost Theban contest of James and William—the lawful, but intolerant and intolerable possessor of the throne, and the unamiable, but enlightened and necessary instrument of his expulsion.

1646.

1688.

Of the Irish, there had been no Religious *Reformation* ; illiterate, they could not find their own way ; and poor, they had little to tempt the missionaries of Henry the VIIIth : all, therefore, in Ireland, that was Irish, was Papist ; almost all that was English, was Protestant. James was a Papist, and William a politician, much more than they were Christians. The blind devotion of the former recommended him to the love and loyalty of the natives, while it exposed him to the fear and enmity of the settlers Hence a

war, perhaps not yet concluded ; and feuds, confessed to be unextinguished.

V. Offended, neglected, and despised by their Revolution respective princes, the two parties evinced a generous attachment to their fortunes. But the greater merit is here with the adherents of James. He, to insult and neglect of his followers, added weakness, and meanness, and cruelty, and cowardice, and defeat ; while William—though the friend only of Holland, and the enemy of Ireland—was a conqueror and a hero, had won three kingdoms, and deserved to win them.

Between such men, it was not fortune that decided ; the courage of James fled at the battle of the Boyne, and even his hopes expired in the treaty of Limerick. By conquest and by capi- 1691. tulation, the triumph of William was complete ; as complete, at least, as he desired. Ireland indeed was not tranquillised, but his throne was secured. With war enough at home, she had none to invade the shores of her neighbour. William seized her as an outwork of England, as he took Namur for the safety of Holland.

But though James had abandoned the Irish, the Measures of the Irish Jacobites. Irish had not abandoned James : against his undis-

turbed predecessors, they had maintained desultory but implacable war ; to him, expelled and outlawed, they exhibited, as were their character and custom, a perverse loyalty, like their perverse rebellion, blind to its object, and atrocious in its measures.

1689. While James and his power lingered in Ireland, he assembled a pseudo-parliament. He had chosen the members ; he chose the measures—1st the act of repeal, justifying all rebellion, breaking all faith ; 2d the act of attainder, proscribing thousands by name, and millions by inference ; 3d the act for liberty of conscience, licence to the papists, hardship to the reformed. The whole closed with the subversion of established institutions, dilapidation of churches, spoliation of bishoprics, denunciation, plunder, and oppression of the whole Protestant community.

Penal laws
against Pa-
pists.

VII. From the Papist, thus lately tyrannical, now subdued, the Protestant thought it justifiable to subtract all power. Obsolete penalties were revived, and new restraint enacted—of their ambition from the senate, their partiality from the magistracy, their force from the field : that influence, often misused, should not be regained,
1703. possessions were forfeited, acquisitions forbidden ;

that disaffection, as it was natural, should be impotent, weapons of offence were stricken from their hands, and the means of resistance removed, as its causes were multiplied.

The retaliation was complete ; not so its justification. William had ratified the articles of Limerick, and broke them ;—a policy useful to him and his near successors, fatal to us ; ensuring temporary tranquillity, and lasting dissension. Contempt would have extinguished the Popish superstition, proscription has perpetuated it.

The sword had failed, while both had swords ; the law had failed, while it existed but for one ; the alliance of the law and the sword effected something. It has been called a peace, and a truce—it was a pause—‘to the Catholics,’ said Mr. Grattan eloquently, ‘a sad servitude, to the Protestants a drunken triumph ;’ but, had James prevailed, it had been to the Protestants neither sad nor servitude, but death ! to the Catholics a triumph, not drunken, but bloody ! This, experience deduces from the ferocious bigotry of that sect at that day ; this, history writes or warrants ; this, Mr. Grattan, in his candour and intelligence, does not doubt.

English in-
fluence

1698.

VIII. Where the warfare of the nations ceased, that of their *Parliaments* began : the English to assume new, or to assert ancient superiority ; the Irish to deny the latter, and to resist both. Then Molyneux wrote his *Case of Ireland*, valuable for its matter, important in its effect, interesting as the dawn of political discussion. It shook the presumption of one parliament, and fortified the confidence of the other. Hence a more modern policy : the seat and style of the discussion was changed ; the contest was no longer between the senates themselves, but between the adherents of each in the Irish parliament.

A supremacy more complete than she dared to claim as of right, England now established by *influence*—a courteous name for profligacy on one side, and prostitution on the other. Hence a degraded population, a hireling aristocracy, a corrupt government ; hence the low intrigues, meanness, and misery, of three generations.

From the reign of William to that of George the III^d—a long pause in the annals
1715. of our turbulence—during two jacobite invasions,
1745. while half England was hesitating, and Scot-

land had treasonably decided between the Protestant prince and Popish pretender, Ireland was tranquil; in allegiance sullen, perhaps, but unbroken. But this is all the historian has to tell; the rest was the squabble of petty pretenders to power, unimportant even in its day, contemptible in ours; youth became age, and age sank into the grave in silence and ignorance: for our glory nothing was achieved, for our improvement nothing attempted: almost a century is almost a blank.

IX. With one great exception. On this gloom, Character of Dean Swift. one luminary rose; and Ireland worshipped it with almost Persian idolatry: personal resentment was, perhaps, the first motive of the patriotism of SWIFT, but it assumed in its progress a higher port, and directed itself by nobler considerations. The jealousy of the partisan soon expanded into the generous devotion of a patriot, and the power of his mind and the firmness of his character raised him to an ascendancy which no other individual ever attained or deserved; above suspicion, he was trusted; above envy, he was beloved; above rivalry, he was obeyed. His wisdom was at once practical and prophetic; re-

medial for the present, warning for the future : he first taught Ireland that she might become a nation, and England that she might cease to be a despot. But he was a churchman. His gown impeded his course, and entangled his efforts ; guiding a senate, or heading an army, he had perhaps been equal to Cromwell, and Ireland not less than England : as it was, he saved her by his courage, improved her by his authority, adorned her by his talents, and exalted her by his fame.

1724. His mission was but of ten years ; and for ten

1734. years only did his personal power mitigate the government : but when no longer feared by the great, he was yet not forgotten by the wise ; his influence, like his writings, has survived a century ; and the foundations of whatever prosperity we have since erected, are laid in the disinterested and magnanimous patriotism of Swift.

This is not digression, it is instruction ; justice to the dead, example to the living, it is the debt we owe, and the precept we should inculcate ; when such a man is emulated, his country is redeemed.

Declaration
of inde-
pendence.

X. The accession of George the III^d. was to Ireland the æra, not of her independence, but of

the diffusion of those principles, which twenty years after effected, and in twenty years more destroyed it.

Of the injustice of England towards America, the retribution was signal, and the result universal. Ambition was foiled, obstinacy subdued : and oppression on one conferred freedom on both shores of the Atlantic. While her right arm was employed in scourging or curbing America, the reins and rod of Ireland were forced from the other ; and distress resigned what generosity would never have bestowed. Ireland thought that she had attained the maturity at which the pillage of a people should cease ; and she undertook, in the pride of heart, the management of her own revenues, the regulation of her own family, and the maintenance of her own rank in the society of nations. 1782.

XI. Of this revolution, bloodless, or only bought with American blood, Mr. Grattan was the leader. *His* history is now identified with his country's, and even his character may be assimilated to hers. A mind impetuous, and determined ; views not always correct, but always generous ; an eloquence peculiar and popular ; in

Character
of Mr.
Grattan.

a delivery somewhat fantastical, but most impressive; gentle manners; a feeling heart; undaunted spirit; in private, most of what is amiable; in public, much of what is great. Flattered and reviled, alternately and intemperately, he has been worshipped and branded, as a saviour and as a traitor—that exaggeration, this falsehood. What he sought for Ireland he did not always obtain; much of what he obtained has reverted; much of what has not reverted is injurious: *this is not salvation*. Too true to his party to be always just towards his opponents—too fond of liberty to be always on his guard against licence, the public eye, incapable of nice distinctions in perilous times, confounded him with agitators with whom he had nothing in common but some hasty expressions, and some indiscreet and untimely opinions; when at last the crisis came, he injudiciously retired from the senate, and abandoned for a moment his station in the country. But *this was not treason*. Thus, however, living characters are drawn.

The Independence nominal.

XII. The lifetime of our independence was short, its author is still * living, his measure already

* These sheets were first published in 1808. Mr. Grattan died in 1820, in the enjoyment of the undivided respect of all parties, and the unanimous admiration of his country.

dead : ‘ he sate by its cradle, he followed its hearse.’ Murmurs against this dispensation of Providence have arisen, but unjustly. The being, ‘ *from its mother’s womb untimely ripp’d,*’ was faint and feeble ; the dissolution, though sudden, was natural ; though early, not premature.

Totally separated from England, an independent existence was, perhaps, possible—but while the connexion, however modified, subsisted, it was visionary. The claim of right was extinguished, but the activity of influence was subtilised and invigorated. It was in nature that the greater should rule the less ; it was in nature too, that, intoxicated with fancies of freedom, Ireland should revolt at the reality of dependence ; too powerful for a province, too weak for a rival ; the consequences were inevitable—a Rebellion and the UNION.

XIII. In force for nearly a century of quiet, the popery laws had been lately mitigated. Relaxation
of penal
code.

Elated at this favour, while independence was 1778. in progress, the Catholics expected to be *triumphant*, on its establishment—not unreasonably. Of Great Britain and Ireland they were an inconsiderable sect ; of solitary Ireland an im-

portant majority. In its narrow scale of politics, they hoped for weight, perhaps preponderance ! in vain—the independence was nominal ; the connexion real. Disappointment ensued, and dissatisfaction. Nor were these confined to the Catholics. The volunteers, a great body of all religions, heated by popular discussions in military assemblies—confiding in their arms and numbers—bold in their impunity, and infected with licentious politics, had wishes which they dared not speak, and would gladly have taken what it were treason to demand.

Provincial
disorder.

1783.

XIV. In this tumult the Catholic was again exigent, and the Protestant indifferent, or favourable ; further relaxation ensued, and more general tumult.

1784.

Minds became unsettled : the state feeble, insurrection strong. In the north, an armed parliament discussed constitutional theories and despised the existent laws : but confined itself to speculative treason. In the south there was actual war : midnight insurgents seized whole counties ; at the close of the day the populace rose, and all was confusion and cruelty, flakes of fire and

streams of blood, till the dawn ;—evils real or imaginary, the excuses ; evils monstrous and inevitable, the consequences. They evaded the 1787. law, they escaped the sword ; at last they defied both. The nights were nights of plunder, the days of punishment, and both of horror.

Then, as now, the disease was referred to the severities of the popery code, and tithe system—and the remedy suggested was the repeal of both. But the alleged grounds of Irish insurrection are seldom real. The rebellion is raised first, and the grievance found afterwards ; as between individuals of our nation, the quarrel often preceded the ostensible offence.

XV. While further indulgences to the Ca- Further relaxation. tholics were granted, and others in progress, 1792. the French revolution, having filled its own country brimful with misery, began to overflow upon ours. Much of that event Ireland had already anticipated ; for the rest she was prepared. She had had her *national* [convention, her *national guards*, and her *regenerated constitution* ; she too was doomed to have her massacres, her desolation. The course some-

what less bloody, the crisis shorter, and the event more fortunate, but neither totally dissimilar.

1793. Again, the claims of the Catholics—and again, the concession of the government; the offensive code repealed in *more* than they desired—almost all that it contained; nothing reserved, but the command of armies, the dignities of the law, the senate and the throne.

And thus the question now stands!—where will it *rest*?

Character
of Lord
Clare.

XVI. In obtaining these concessions, Mr. Grattan was aided by Gardiner, lord Mountjoy, and O'Neil, lord O'Neil, the earliest friends of the Catholics, the first victims of the rebellion. Against them stood, sometimes alone, Fitzgibbon, earl of Clare; a man not to be omitted in even a *sketch* of Irish history. Of extraordinary endowments, great acquisitions, and transcendant arrogance. Bold and voluble in his speech, daring in his counsels, and fixed in his resolves, the stature of his mind overtopped his associates, and collected upon him the eyes of all, the shafts of many. An humble origin could not moderate his pride; though success and almost supreme power, seemed to temper it.

In wrath, less violent, than sudden ; in revenge, not frequent, but implacable ; he deserved more political friends, fewer enemies ; but there was something in him that would be obeyed, and his opponents fled, and his party fell before his victorious and envied ascendancy. As chancellor, like Shaftesbury, he had no enemy ; and administered justice with undivided applause. In private, he was amiable ; to his family, his friends, and his followers, indulgent, faithful, and generous. In peaceful times, he would have been beloved—and lost. In days of ferment, if a demagogue, he would have shaken, as when minister he supported, the pillars of the state.

The popish religion he thought unfavourable to freedom and knowledge ; its professors, hostile to the government and constitution. Hence his opposition to all indulgences of that sect ; always consistent—often imprudent.

As Mr. Grattan was called traitor—so was Lord Clare—tyrant, with equal exaggeration. When prejudices shall be buried in the graves of these illustrious rivals, we shall probably confess that both were sincere, both fallible ; both honest,—

both mistaken ;—human in their errors and passions, immortal by their virtues and patriotism.

Rebellion
of 1798.

XVII. The hordes of petty rebels, that for twenty years, under twenty barbarous names and pretences, had harassed the land, now sank into one great union against all civil and ecclesiastical institutions—it was the legacy of the American contest paid by France. The conflagration was general : war on every side : in Ulster of politics ; elsewhere, of bigotry. The
1798. Dissenter fought—the Papist massacred—the Loyalist cut down both. Some provocation there may have been ; much vengeance there was : but where most, if any, provocation, least slaughter, no cruelty ; where no previous oppression, most blood, much torture. The details of of this rebellion, realising all we read of 1641, I am willing to omit ; but its *objects* must not be forgotten—that of the Dissenters—a republic ; that of the Papists—popish ascendancy ; of both, connexion with France, separation from England. Its results too are important ; Union with England, separation from France, and both, we trust, eternal.

XVIII. From the principles of 1782 sprang

inevitably connexion with France, or Union with England. The late and decided atrocities accelerated the choice—not without hesitation. A haughty aristocracy and a proud people did not easily resign their power and their name; nor an aspiring gentry their hopes; all about to be lost in British ascendancy. The aversion was almost unanimous, and twice victorious. But Mr. Pitt was undaunted: he saw that this vital measure, once proposed, must be carried, or the country lost; and fortunately Stewart, Viscount Castlereagh, then Minister in Ireland, happened to possess the qualities that were necessary to second so great a design.

Young and inexperienced—unknown in business—little known in the world—unconnected with either of the great political parties which had so long divided the Irish Senate, Lord Castlereagh would not have been selected by an ordinary mind for the conduct of such a measure, which involved every branch of national policy—struck every string of public and private feeling, and awakened all the prejudices and all the passions of individuals, of parties, of sects, and of nations! But those who knew him judged better; his inexpe-

rience was compensated by an intuitive knowledge of mankind—his youth was moderated by temper and self-possession; and the highest intrepidity, softened by the gentlest manners, gave him an even more than moral influence which—in a popular assembly, at once, violent and punctilious—neither rank, nor wealth, nor even talents alone could have obtained.

It is the painful lot of a minister that he has to deal with the infirmities of the human mind, and that those who are insensible to higher motives must be urged by the incentives which they are capable of feeling.

The opponents of the Union charged its promoters with deception, intimidation, corruption—and though the extent of these arts was probably exaggerated, no doubt much was done which many would think unjustifiable, and which all would agree to be unavowable.

But those, who denounced these acts of the Ministers, were obliged, by the same necessity, to practise them. The rage of the people was opposed to the allurements of the Court; popularity bid against favor, hope against fear, and resignation was sometimes consoled by the hopes of

a reversion :—both parties addressed themselves to the best passions of mankind, and to the worst ; but with different success ;—the honest preferred England to France ; the base, possession to expectancy ; and the act of Union was passed—strange to add, not only without bloodshed, but almost without violence. But the parties had been rather enthusiastic than cordial. Each feared its own success ; the Opposition theirs, as dangerous—the Unionists theirs, as degrading—to the country. The victory was without triumph, and the defeat without dejection.

XIX. The Earl of Hardwicke's succeeded the Union administration. His counsels—by his friends alleged not to be his own—were weak and double. By his public and private gentleness, some ostentatious charity, and the universal purchase of the press, the shadow of popularity was acquired, but this shadow, with which he was contented, deceived England, and darkened Ireland. Inactivity, on the part of the Government, was called mildness and conciliation—sullenness on that of the People, content and gratitude. On this calm of conciliation and content, burst forth another rebellion ; short in its duration,

Lord Hard-
wicke's ad-
ministra-
tion.

1803.

contemptible in its actions, but serious by its unsounded depth and unknown extent. It was the policy of that day to under-rate the danger; and the peril of Ireland was forgotten in a squabble between the governor and the general.

Mr. Pitt.

XX. In aid of the Union the Ministry had courted the Catholics; but they found the Sovereign averse to any further concession; and were reduced to the necessity of vindicating their honor by a resignation of their power. In such affairs a minister should not promise without a previous authority to perform, nor is his resignation any satisfaction to those, whose cause that resignation only renders more desperate.

1804. Mr. Pitt's conduct while out of office had no relation to Irish affairs; but his return to power ought to have had. This the Catholics felt—they were the holders of his promises, and they now demanded their amount. The minister could not deny the debt, but asked time, to pay. *He* would have temporised: but England is not tolerant of popery, nor Ireland of suspense; both parties hastened on to discussion, in which the Catholic was successfully opposed by the ministers, who had, a few years before, favoured—

and violently supported by the opposition, who, a few years after, sacrificed him. Such are the inconsistencies of faction.

Ireland sank back into her silence; and all again was mild and grateful and hollow: a halcyon calm, momentary and delusive. The stupendous conquests of the French, the dissolution of the whole European system, astounded the loyal and inspirited the disaffected;—the death of Mr. Pitt—dying, probably, of the general despair—deepened the gloom, and the choice of the new ministry did not alleviate the anxieties of the friends of civil and ecclesiastical establishments in Ireland, in England, or in Europe.

Such was the state of things when the departure of Lord Hardwicke bequeathed to his successor insurrection in five counties, discontent in twenty, and agitation in all. 1806.

XXI. That* successor was John Duke of Bedford, amiable and honourable, but by party connexions unfitted for the station of Viceroy of Ireland. The brother of Francis—that inconsistent Duke, whose democratical folly Burke has

Adminis-
tration of
the Duke of
Bedford.

* The Earl of Powis was named by Mr. Pitt's ministry to succeed Lord Hardwicke, but he never came to Ireland.

immortalised.—He inherited likewise his influence, his politics and his party. That party, Mr. Fox conducted in England, and the Ponsonby's in Ireland. In opposition at the time of the French Revolution, they naturally but unfortunately connected themselves with the friends of that event. But that event was too strong for them and for itself—Revolution became subversion. Entangled in its anarchy, they could neither restrain their associates, nor disengage themselves; and Europe saw with wonder a British aristocracy interchanging praises and principles with the democrats of France.

Popular
with the
disaffected.

XXII. They repented, no doubt, but in private; and, until they had given ministerial proofs of their conversion, they possessed the disgraceful confidence of the ill-affected in all countries. At their exaltation, the intemperance of their late associates in Ireland knew no bounds: the advent of the Whig viceroy was hailed by the same voices which had before welcomed the French. To his first levee crowded, in the levelling audacity of their joy, persons of every rank, except the highest; of every description, but the loyal. From their concealment or exile suddenly

emerged the unexecuted patriots of 1798, bearding and insulting the very magistrates before whom they had been convicted. Some indiscreet legal promotions, some ill-advised civil appointments, raised to confidence the hopes of those fanatics ; but raised only to overthrow. The viceroy, awakened to his sense and dignity, and the chancellor—Ponsonby—respectable by his birth and talents, were disgusted at the vulgar fellowship, and alarmed at the traitorous insolence. They did something, and should have done more, to the repression of both ; but they wished not, or dared not, to exasperate an unforgiving faction ; and by their want of decision lost one party without gaining the other ; all were disaffected or dissatisfied.

Though beyond the strict limits of my essay, it is right to say that in *European* politics also, the ministry disappointed the hopes of their former friends, before they had time to conciliate the good will of their late antagonists.

After an ill-judged but consistent effort at peace, they found themselves obliged to adopt the policy they had so long reprobated ; and no doubt they would have pursued it with firmness and zeal.—But the Irish Catholics were again to dis-

solve a British ministry. The opinion of the Sovereign with regard to them was known to be unchanged, and every intreaty and intrigue were employed by the ministry to dissuade the Catholics from another parliamentary appeal for indulgence. But the Catholics were resolved on the attempt, and I cannot blame their resolution; I did not think it untimely, I can never think it unjust; I approved their pressure upon Mr. Pitt—I cannot disapprove their earnestness with Mr. Fox, but I blame, I denounce, as traitorous to the constitution and ruinous to their cause, the speeches then published by their pretended and pernicious friends;—fatal advocates! if, indeed, their real object was Catholic emancipation, and not Catholic insurrection.

Catholic
Bill of
1807.

XXIII. To stifle this appeal, that threatened it with dissolution, the ministry proposed a substitute—an expedient—to quiet the Catholic, to conciliate the king, and thus to keep their places permanently. It had a double face, this measure; and I scarcely know by which to describe it. It was represented—to the Catholic, as opening to him every rank of military honour; to the king, as giving nothing new, but merely raising the *English* Catholic to the *Irish* level. In Dublin,

it was blazoned as a triumph to Ireland ; at Windsor, it was mitigated into mere justice to England :—but the fraud met its fate ; the British king refused to decorate the Roman triumph. Scorned by the Sovereign, by the Catholic, and by the Protestant, the ministry were driven from the cabinet, and at the ensuing elections hardly found their way into the senate.

I regret, not the loss of this bill, but that it, or a more liberal, * was not candidly proposed, and honestly carried. I lament, not that those ministers lost their places, but that their deserved failure has disgraced and endangered a good cause, and disappointed and disturbed an unhappy people.

XXIV. Thus far we have walked in the foot- Remedies.
steps of time, and heard the voice of history. Events lead us to experience, experience to improvement. There remain then for inquiry the present evil—the future remedy.

Nations have moral as well as physical climates ; and no good is practicable, no institution can be permanent, that is not fitted to the national tem-

* An act of the same purport,—57 Geo. III. c. 92,—passed in 1807 without opposition, almost without observation.

perament. The plant of the east withers in the west, the animal of the north degenerates in the south. We have but lately and imperfectly learned, that political modes which exalt one country may debase another.

The self-confidence of England in her system, may be wisdom at home, but it is folly abroad; she would legislate for Corsica and India, as for Wales or Devon, and hast lost one, and risked the loss of the other. France, by the converse of the same madness, introduced foreign principles into her government, and lost herself. Humanity rejoices that she has arisen from the grave of democracy; and those even who think worst of Buonaparte, assent to my reasoning, by attributing his success to the congeniality of his institutions. He has re-established the throne of the Bourbons to seat himself in it.

Ireland—and in a greater degree than other countries—has feelings that must be flattered; and prejudices and habits, that, to be conquered, must be soothed. She must not be stretched on the Procrustan bed, and lopped or lengthened to an iron scale. Those that legislate for her should

know her, and their system should be elastic and accommodating.

Thus impressed, I trace the outline of our manners freely, and, if I can, truly.

XXV. Its popular character and customs distinguish and disincline Ireland from England. Varieties have been sought in the national disposition, referable to the double origin of the Irish people, in vain : however differing in rank, party, or ancestry, they bear the indelible mark of a common nativity. Restless, yet indolent ; shrewd, and indiscreet ; impetuous, impatient, and improvident ; instinctively brave, thoughtlessly generous ; quick to resent and forgive offences, to form and renounce friendships ; they will forgive injury rather than insult ; their country's good they seldom, their own they carelessly, pursue, but the honour of both they eagerly vindicate ; oppression they have long borne, insolence never.

With genius they are profusely gifted, with judgment sparingly ; to acquire knowledge they find more easy than to arrange and employ it : inferior in vanity only to the French, and in wit superior perhaps even to the Italian, they are more able to give, and more ready to receive, amusement than

instruction ; in raillery and adulation they freely indulge, but without malignity or baseness. It is the singular temper of this people, that they are prone equally to satirize and to praise, and patient alike of sarcasm and flattery.

Inclining to exaggerate, but not intending to deceive, you will applaud them rather for sincerity than truth. Accuracy is not the merit, nor duplicity the failing, of a lively but neglected and uncultivated people. Their passions lie on the surface, unsheltered from irritation or notice : and cautious England is too fond of recognizing the Irish character only by these inconsistencies and errors, which her own novercal government has contributed to produce or perpetuate.

The upper
classes.

XXVI. In their domestic life, the gentry and traders differ from the English of equal rank, not in essentials but in modes. Here are less neatness and economy, more enjoyment and society. Emulative profusion is an Irish folly. The gentry would rival the nobility ; the merchant affects to surpass, and the shopkeeper to approach, the splendor of the gentry. Hence patrimonies are dilapidated ; hence capital is diverted from business to pleasure : the profit of one enterprise is not, as in

England, embarked in another, but sunk in a villa or an equipage. The English trader bequeaths, the Irish enjoys ; but his enjoyment is not often elegant, and seldom secure.

The nobility and affluent gentry spend much or all of their fortunes and time in England ; leaving their places to be filled—in the country, by hired agents—in the city, by a plebeian aristocracy : the former, solely engaged in increasing and collecting rents, can have little conciliatory power with the people ; and the influence of the latter tends rather to increase than diminish the political danger.

A great evil. Not because the country is drained by remittances, but because she is widowed of her natural protectors. The loss is, not of money, but manners ; not of wealth, but of civilization and peace.

XXVII. The condition of the peasant was of late utterly, and is still almost, barbarous. What the Romans found the Britons and Germans, the Britons found the Irish—and left them : the neglect of the conquerors or the degeneracy of the colonists, and the obstinacy of the natives, have preserved, even to our day, living proofs of the

The peasantry.

veracity of Cæsar and Tacitus : of this, many will affect to be incredulous—of the Irish, lest it diminish the character of their country—of the English, because it arraigns the wisdom and policy of their system, But the experienced know it to be true, and the impartial will own it.

The cultivator of the land seldom holds from the inheritor ; between them stands a series of sub-landlords and tenants, each receiving a profit from his lessee, but having no further interest or connexion with the soil. The last in the series must provide for the profits of all—he therefore parcels out, at rack rents, the land to his miserable tenant. Here is no yeomanry, no agricultural capitalist ; no degree between the landlord and labourer ; and the words ‘peasantry’ and ‘poor’ are synonymous.

Modes of
life.

XXVIII. Their dwellings are of primitive and easy construction—the walls and floors of clay, the roof of sod or thatch : within, are two unequal divisions ; in the smaller, filthy and unfurnished, you would hardly suppose the whole family to sleep ; in the larger, on a hearth, without grate or chimney, a scanty fire warms rather by its smoke than its blaze, and discolours whatever it

warms. Glazed windows there are none, the open door amply sufficing for light and air, to those who are careless of either. Furniture they neither have, nor want; their food and its preparation are simple—potatoes or oaten cakes, sour milk, and sometimes salted fish. In drink they are not so temperate: of all spirituous liquors they are immoderately fond, but most of whiskey, the distilled extract of fermented corn. In many districts, by an ingenious and simple process, they prepare this liquor themselves, but clandestinely, and to the great injury of national morals and revenue. Were they allowed, by private distillation, to indulge their taste for inebriety, their own vice would more effectually subdue them than centuries of war.

XXIX. Their dress is mean and squalid; par- Their dress.
ticularly of the females, whom you would not always distinguish from men by their attire. Of personal cleanliness they have little care. Both sexes wear, in winter and summer, long woollen coats, or cloaks, like the sagum of their ancestors. The children are generally half, and sometimes altogether naked; living, without distinction of sexes, in dirt [and mire, almost with the cattle.

Yet from this nakedness and filth, they grow up to that strength and stature for which they are admirable.

Their Religion.

XXX. The peasantry of Ireland are generally of the Roman Catholic religion, but utterly and disgracefully ignorant ; few among them can read, fewer write. The Irish language, a barbarous jargon, is generally, and in some districts exclusively, spoken : and with it are retained customs and superstitions as barbarous. Popish legends and pagan tradition are confounded, and revered : for certain holy wells, and sacred places, they have extraordinary respect ; thither crowd, the sick for cure, and the sinful for expiation ; and their priests, deluded or deluding, enjoin those pilgrimages as penance, or applaud them, when voluntary, as piety. The religion of such a people is not to be confounded with one of the same name professed by the enlightened nations of Europe. The University of Paris has some tenets in common, perhaps, with the Irish Papist ; but does *it* believe that spring water can restore the cripple, enlighten the blind, or purify the guilty ?

Their manners.

XXXI. In agricultural pursuits they are neither active nor expert : hereditary indolence

would incline them to employ their lands in pasturage ; and it is often more easy to induce them to take arms, for their country, or against it, than to cultivate the earth, and wait upon the seasons. Even at this day, the sons of the old inheritors are suspected of being more ready to regain their possessions by their blood, than by their labour. Their very amusements are polemical : fighting is a pastime, which they seldom assemble without enjoying ; not, indeed, with iron weapons, but with clubs, which they always carry, and frequently and skilfully use. When not driven by necessity to labour, they willingly consume whole days in sloth, or as willingly employ them in riot ; strange diversity of nature, to love indolence and hate quiet—to be reduced to slavery, but not yet to obedience.

XXXII. Who will call this people civilized, or wonder that they are turbulent ? Who con-
 fide in the empiric promising to cure so complicated a disorder by a single specific ? It is but too plain, that there is something to be lamented, and, if possible, changed, in the character of the nation—much in its habits—more in the accidental circumstances in which it languishes ; and

No single
remedy suf-
ficient.

it is evident, that no individual remedy can reach and reform evils so heterogeneous. Party is indeed blind, and ignorance adventurous; but the time, we trust, is past, when party and ignorance alone determined upon the interests of Ireland.

Catholic
Emancipa-
tion not
enough.

XXXIII. Friendly—on principles and conditions hereafter to be developed—to Catholic emancipation, I cannot believe it panaceatic—alone beneficial—alone necessary. It will be a part—but only a part—of any enlightened system of Irish policy: but it is not itself a system.

Who can be emancipated, and from *what*? At most six lords, one hundred and fifty commoners, and twenty ecclesiastics; from four or five disabilities, which reach not, interest not, the mass of their community. Theorists trace from the political exclusion of the peer, the mental debasement of the peasant—truly, perhaps, in a people affluent and enlightened; truly in small and polished states; falsely in a great mass of penury and ignorance. Dispel the gloom, enrich the penury, the crowd may then, and cannot till then, become sympathetic to the feelings of honour and ambition: hence, I reason, that to mere emanci-

pation there are previous paramount duties; that enlightening two millions of Catholics is more important than indulging two hundred.

But the Irish Protestant, has he no grievance—labours he under no difficulty? has he no cause, or taint of disaffection? Your Protestant tenants, few in numbers;—your Protestant artisans and manufacturers, a great and pining population—ask them for a description of their exclusive Paradise. In all that regards happiness and power you will find them to be Catholics, reading the liturgy; as the Catholics are Protestants, singing the mass. Emancipate *them*, emancipate all; vivify your country—not in details, but in generals; not in extremities, but at the heart.

XXXIV. To catalogue and class the diseases and remedies would be a treatise. I only sketch—happy if what I write hastily, be read at all. Principal causes of the evil.

Compendiously, then—the springs of our misfortune are five-fold:—1. The ignorance—2. The poverty—3. The political debasement of the inferior orders—4. The Catholic code—5. The provinciality of the government.

XXXV. 1. Domestic economy, agricultural Ignorance of the people.

improvement, the love and knowledge of the laws, the detection and expulsion of superstition, the growth and influence of true piety, who can expect them among a people utterly dark and blind? Of four millions—the probable population—one million perhaps can write and read; of this million, three-fourths are Protestants and Protestant Dissenters: there remains a solid mass of dangerous and obstinate ignorance; not all, but chiefly, Catholic. The laws of God they take on trust, of the land on guess, and despise or insult both. The Government publishes proclamations, the rebel chiefs manifestoes—the rebel soldier reads neither: his spiritual or secular leader he follows into *implicit* treason; incapable of discussing motives or being enlightened by results; and thus the folly and defeat of one insurrection do not deter from another.

In all our perils—it is an important truth—the real danger is in those who cannot read, the true security in those who can. Superior knowledge is one cause and branch of the Protestant ascendancy, from which the Catholics must emancipate themselves.

XXXVI. The remedy of this evil must be

sought in its causes; a narrow and sectarian plan of public education, the mistaken policy of the popish priesthood, the absence or indolence of the established clergy—sources of more and greater evils than Ireland thinks, or England would believe.

Necessity of
a general
system of
education.

To the Government I should say—"Educate your people:" I care not by what system, if it be capacious; nor at what cost, if it be productive.

Between systems of public instruction, I will not decide; *that*, however, must be preferable, which acts most by incitement and least by force. I should even—not unhesitatingly—venture to propose, that those only should vote at elections who could write and read their own affidavits of registry. This principle is not novel in our Constitution, our wise ancestors promoted learning by granting, even to criminals, the benefit of clergy. Would it not be as efficacious, and more just to extend to a certain proficiency in letters, not pardon but privilege; not impunity in crime, but advancement in political power. Is it not monstrous, in theory as well as practice, that the grossest ignorance should influence the choice of

a legislator, as much as the most cultivated understanding—that the enlightened should be overborne in the highest exercise of rational liberty, by the rude and barbarous? Yet thus it is, and and the primary assemblies of Ireland are swayed by brutal ignorance and profligate perjury.

We have seen, in some counties, the majority of constituents driven like cattle to the hustings. We have seen them—unable even to speak English—attempt to poll in Irish. We know that these miserable creatures are weapons wielded by the gentry against each other at elections, and by demagogues against the gentry in rebellions. Is this to be borne?—From such turbid and poisoned sources, can the stream be pure and solitary?

Duty of the
Catholic
Clergy.

XXXVII. To the Catholic priesthood I should say, “You profess to be ministers of light, not of darkness; you *should* advance learning—you SHALL not impede it; your tenets shall not be invaded, but your flocks SHALL be instructed.—If you will not cooperate in a generous system of national education, expect no favour from the nation—you shall have none.”

XXXVIII. But to the Established clergy what ^{Duty of} shall I urge? The times, momentous to all, are ^{the Estab-} critical to them: their flocks turbulent, their re-^{lished Cler-} venues invaded, their very hierarchy assailed:—these are not days for sloth. Ireland is divided into 2,500 parishes, melted down into 1,200 benefices, on which there are are but 1,000 churches. The 1,200 beneficed clergy of these 2,500 parishes, where are they? one-third of them are not resident—absentees from their duties—mortmainers upon the land! The Catholic priest, the Dissenting minister, the Methodist preacher, are they supine or absent? Are they without proselytes and converts, without interest or influence with the people? A friend to religion, I am an enemy to salaried idleness. To 2,500 parishes I would have 2,500 parsons; no curates at fifty pounds a year, nor absentees at two thousand; no starving zeal, no lazy affluence. The ecclesiastical establishment, which laymen are invoked to defend, churchmen should support by their presence, dignify by their piety, and extend by their example.

XXXIX. 2. Of the exactions of the owners, ^{Rents.} and the indigence of the cultivators of land, miserable and the consequences. Landlords with-

out friends or influence ; a peasantry without an interest, almost without a livelihood, in the country—nothing to defend—nothing to love—despairing and desperate, ripe and ready for change.

The evil is plain, the remedy not so evident.

The price of the use of land, can—at least should—never be restrained by law : free competition is the life-blood of commerce ; and the relation of landlord and tenant, in the matter of rents, is purely commercial. The appeal, therefore, is to the good feeling and good policy of the landholders.

In England, the law of public opinion, as well as the law of reason, terrifies a landlord from plundering of his own estate : much of it is held at his will ; but his will is wisdom, or the wisdom of others restrains his will ; and he is glad, or obliged, to content himself with just profits, strictly paid, by a thriving tenantry. Where there is protection on one side, fidelity on the other, and confidence on both, the fairest tenure is *at will* : rents then fluctuate with the price of produce, and the results are profits duly apportioned. These results, theorists hence proposed

to obtain by conditional leases, and clauses of surrender and redemption; but unfortunately it is still a theorem.

In *Ireland*, tenure at will, is indefinite oppression—tenure by lease, oppression by lease: rents, are, not the *proportions* of, but nearly the *whole*, produce. The actual cultivator seldom is better paid than by scanty food, ragged raiment, and a miry hovel; nothing is saved for exigencies, nothing remitted for capital: and the peasant and the land are alike neglected, impoverished, and starved.

The theorist says, this, like other commerce, will find its level.

Experience says to the theorist, *it will not*.

The peasant's spirit is broken; he thinks not of independence, dreams not of property, unless in dreams of insurrection. His wishes have no scope; he is habituated to derive from his land and his labour, only his daily potatoe: and we know, that competitors offer the whole value of the produce, minus that daily potatoe. Sometimes more than the whole value is promised, and nothing paid; the tenant for a few months appeases his hunger; quarter-day ap-

proaches—he absconds ; and the absentee landlord in Dublin, or London, exclaims at the knavery of an Irish tenant.

In the mere spirit of trade, what can landlords expect from tenants without capital or credit ? from impoverishing the fountains of their wealth ? from denying their factors even a commission on their profits ?

But a landlord is not a mere land merchant : he has duties to perform, as well as rents to receive ; and from his neglect of the former, spring his difficulty in the latter, and the general misery and distraction of the country. The combination, of the peasantry against this short-sighted monopoly, are natural and fatal. Whoever assembles the Irish, disturbs them ; disturbance soon coalesces with treason ; and the suicide avarice that drives the peasantry to combine, precipitates them to rebel. For fifty years past Ireland has been disturbed and disgraced by a constant warfare between the landlords and their tenants.

Tithes.

XL. Tithes also—the pretence, and, therefore, the cause of an hundred insurrections—belong to this part of the subject. A tax rather vexatious than oppressive, and more embarrassing

than either : vexatious, because paid directly and in kind, at unequal and fluctuating rates : embarrassing, because it is vexatious ; because a people, unanimous in this alone, declaim against it ; and because no satisfactory substitute has been hitherto devised.

But they are not unjust—not even oppressive—rather profitable to the tenant, computed as a *tenth* in his bargain, seldom amounting to a *twentieth* in his payment. Nor are they as is often alleged levied from the Popish peasant for the Protestant parson. By the peasant, Popish or Protestant, they are not in fact paid ; for his headrent is always diminished by more than their amount. Those who occupy tithe-free lands, pay, in the increased rent, a double tithe : hence follow, that tithes are really the contribution of the landlords ; and that to abolish them, without condition or substitute, would be a direct donative to the rich, at the expense of the clergy and the poor.

If abolished, they must be replaced, or the church establishment overthrown. The latter part of the alternative I dismiss altogether from my thoughts ; and shall only consider of the fittest sub-

stitute. I disregard, as an obstacle, the divine origin of tithes ; and disallow the claims of the church to them, as the hereditary property of those, whose clerical character is not itself hereditary. In Levi's family, it might be just that tithes should descend, because the priesthood did: but here they are, as they should be, the property of the state, that pays its ecclesiastical, as it does its civil, military, and fiscal officers, with equal powers of change, modification, and controul.

It has been proposed to replace them, by a *commutation for glebe*, impracticable, I fear, from its complication ;—a *corn rent*, more oppressive and vexatious than the present evil ;—an *acreable land tax*, less objectionable, but unsatisfactory and unequal, as computed on the unalterable *measure*, and not on the various and fluctuating *values* of land.

I, with great hesitation, would propose for consideration, a system not perfect, certainly but less objectionable. *A poundage upon all rents* ; not of a tenth, perhaps not a twentieth, probably of a thirtieth or fortieth.

The clergy, in great towns, are now paid, by a rate on the estimated value of each house. My

proposition would extend this system over the whole country.

In 1787, an intelligent prelate computed the average of each clergyman's annual income, at 133*l.* 6*s.* I will suppose it now to be 250*l.*; the benefices fewer than 1,200; the ecclesiastical establishment less, therefore, than 300,000*l.* But 6*d.* in the pound—one fortieth—on the estimated rent-roll of Ireland, would produce 500,000*l.* A sum adequate to the payment of ALL the clergy, *Protestant, Catholic, and Dissenting.*

But on the other hand it must be confessed that this change—perhaps *any* change—might endanger tithe property altogether. In the times in which we live, and in such as we see approaching, it cannot be doubted that the very evils of the tithe system tend to its preservation. Its complication, its minute distribution, its uncertainty, its division between the laity and clergy,—all act as outworks—as impediments in the way of innovation. That which is made easy of *collection* is made easy of *confiscation*; and if this property were reduced to a known amount, a tangible form, and exclusively affected to ecclesiastical purposes, the temptation to divert it to

other uses would be increased, and the means of doing so facilitated.

In the consideration of these conflicting difficulties one principle, however, may be stated as decided. Tithes in Ireland must follow the fate of tithes in England; and until some change of the system can be made palatable to the Church of England, it is idle to discuss any arrangement here.

But surely some legal provision should, at once, be made for the CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD—for the spiritual ministers of the majority of the people, which now pays, with almost equal reluctance, a double establishment. Such a provision would remove the most plausible and the most serious objections to tithes, and until this be accomplished, tithes in England and tithes in Ireland, can hardly be said to stand on the same grounds of policy and reason.

I pass over the details, I trust practicable, to arrive at the results, certainly beneficial—the peasantry relieved, at least appeased; the landlord secured; the Protestant clergy amply indemnified; the Catholic priesthood, the servants of the British empire, not of Rome, their power of good

increased, of evil destroyed, and their present precarious and illegal livelihoods replaced by a constitutional and honourable provision—a chief cause of animosity eradicated, and the country indulged, improved, perhaps tranquillized, by the extension of a principle already, as in the case of the Dissenting clergy, familiar and approved.

XLI. 3. The practical debasement of the ^{State of the law.} lower orders of society is compounded of their ignorance and poverty—already examined; of the injustice or contumely of their superiors, to discuss which might exasperate these, inflame the others, and injure all;—and lastly, of the dearness and difficulty of legal redress, not to be passed over unlamented—unreprehended.

The law has never thoroughly mingled itself with Ireland: there lately were, perhaps still are, districts impervious to the king's writs—castles fortified against the sheriff, and legal estates invaded by force of arms;—contumacies, not frequent indeed, but from which an inquirer will deduce, not unfairly, ordinary disrespect for the law. This in civil cases. In criminal—how large a share of our jurisprudence!—witnesses not unfrequently suborned, intimidated or murdered—juries sub-

dued—felons acquitted. In common transactions, the administration by justices of the peace, sometimes partial, generally despised and always unsatisfactory. The body—in England so effective—of mayors, bailiffs, and constables, unknown, or known as a jest. Parish offices, sinecures : the great man and the strong man executing, the poor and weak suffering, what is miscalled *the law*.

The blame is not easily apportioned—much is in the pride and folly of the gentry ; much in the native perverseness of the people ; much in the indifference of the government ; something in an indiscreet nomination of magistrates : more, and most of all, in the exorbitant taxation of legal proceedings, by which the law has become, not a refuge to the poor, but a luxury to the rich. The courts are open to the indigent, only as spectators ; the peasant, oppressed or defrauded to the amount of 10*l.*, cannot buy even a chance of redress in the lottery of the law for less than 60*l.* By victory or defeat he is equally and irremediably ruined. This system *must* be amended—abandoned.

I consider the habitual weakness of the law, as the first cause of the habitual weakness of the land, from Henry to George.

The thoughts of those who read for ideas, not words, fill up my outline. Let us hope that the wisdom of the legislature will soon erase it.

XLII. 4. On the subject of Catholic emanci-<sup>Catholic
Emancipa-
tion.</sup> pation all men speak and write, but few candidly,—its supporters and its opponents are equally injudicious or unjust ; the reason is, that the parties of the state have divided the question between them ; and contest it, not for its sake, but their own : it is the means, not the object of the war.

The Roman empire was divided into two factions, and the green and the blue distracted the civilized world. Did the civilized world bleed for the colour of an actor's coat, when they seemed to do so? No. They bled for their party, not for its symbol. Catholic emancipation is the green and blue of Ireland, the colour of the division, not the cause. This the liberal, the sagacious, and the well informed, have admitted : though all the furious, the shallow, and the bigoted, deny it, and prove it by their very denial.

How else could half a nation so pertinaciously seek, and the other half refuse an almost empty privilege? How else can it have happened that every concession has produced

commotion, and complaint encreased as the grievance disappeared? Twenty years ago there was much to desire, and to deny, and the Catholic code was scarcely thought of: there now remains, unconceded, nothing in which the *people* are concerned—yet to the Catholic code is attributed all our misfortunes. The truth is, the parties have made the question, not the question the parties.

Claims of
the Catho-
lics.

XLIII. Let us review and refute the sophisms of both: and first of the emancipators.

1. ‘The merits of the Catholics.’ What merits? They have been loyal in 1715, 1745, and 1797: *perhaps* in 1798 and in 1803: but if they were—as they were not—unexceptionably loyal, what is the merit? Is it a virtue not to be criminal? is not to rebel, supererrogation? Admit, however, the merit: has it not been already rewarded? A century of penalties remitted in half a score of years, is it no boon? Admit, again, that the reward was inadequate; we then ask, was the Catholic so much *more* loyal than the Protestant, that the latter should be stripped of his ascendancy to clothe the former?—My conclusion is, that he who vaunts his loyalty as a merit, has little merit in his loyalty, and that when *Catholic* merit is

pleaded against the ascendancy, *Protestant* merit should be pleaded for it, and a balance struck.

2. The emancipators allege 'the force and power of the Catholic body,' and apply the argument doubly; offering assistance—or threatening opposition. What new assistance can we have? Two thirds of our military are already Catholics; because two thirds of our population are so. If the proportion of Catholic soldiers and sailors be greater, it is and will be so, because they are the poorer sect; poverty, in all countries, takes refuge in the armies; nor would Catholic emancipation make one man in Ireland a soldier, who had wealth enough to remain a citizen. Thus vanishes their boasted aid. Their hostility I do not fear. The Catholic force can never be united against the present establishment of law and property; and, if it should, it would find that physical strength is not the best part of power.

3. It has been alleged, that 'all our disturbances have sprung from the hardships under which the Catholics labour.' What is this, but to say, that they are *not* patient and loyal—that the rebellions and massacres, which we hoped were

political, have all been *Catholic*; the works of a perverse and pestilent sect, incapable of gratitude, unworthy of indulgence, unfit for toleration?—Such is the false and detestable allegation of a partizan, espousing the Catholic cause without affection, and calumniating his friends to dupe his opponents. But let *us* not charge upon the Catholic as a crime the frenzy of his advocate.

4. ‘The moral injustice of the Catholic laws’ is vehemently urged, but not easily proved. The Papist, when able, proscribed the Protestant: the victorious Protestant copied the Papist statute against its enactors. We may doubt that this was wise, but not that it was just.* Who pities the inventor and victim of the brazen bull? ‘But it is unjust,’ the Catholics add, ‘that the minority of a people should restrict the majority, which majority we are.’ True, numerically, as two exceed one. But if rank, property, education, industry, skill, manners, intelligence—the essence of a nation—be esteemed, they are, of Ireland even, a weak minority; as, both numerically and morally, they are of the empire at large.

* ——— nec est lex *justior* ulla
Quam necis artifices arte perire suâ.

—Finally, their plea should be, not of their force, nor of their numbers, but of their moderation, liberality, and innocuous tenets: if they prove the former, without the latter, they prove against themselves.

XLIV. Their adversaries have but little advantage over them in the argument. The fear of the Protestant, like the complaint of the Papist, comes too late. It strains at the gnat, having swallowed the camel. Objections
of the Pro-
testants.

I can well conceive why Lord Clare would have strangled Papist—privilege in its birth;—why he feared to make the first plunge down the declivity of concession;—why he refused power to the numerous and dangerous. But I cannot conceive, why we should now feel this after-alarm; why, having rushed down precipices, we stop short at a slope; why we instigate and indulge the populace, and restrict and discourage the rich, the noble, and the loyal.

If we fear the revengeful bigotry of the Papist, let us not exasperate, without disarming him. The power of the gentry and priesthood, let us either conciliate or unnerve. We are in a practical dilemma. We must resume

all that we have granted, or grant all that we retain.

I confidently advise the latter course.

Catholic
Emancipa-
tion safe.

XLV. Before the Union, this perfect toleration was impracticable. No State religion has ever dared to indulge a sectarian majority. France persecuted the Protestant; England the Papist; and Scotland both: and all succeeded. When Scotland became *predominately* presbyterian, France catholic, and England protestant, persecution ceased, and toleration began. Ireland is almost the only country in the world which has not had the disgrace and the benefit of active persecution. There was enough to exasperate—not extinguish. But what early intolerance might have effected, the UNION has, by gentle means, accomplished. The established *now* out-number the sectaries, and the Catholic assertion of ‘force,’ and the Protestant of ‘danger,’ are equally absurd.

Do we fear a Papist parliament?—The majority of the freeholders of the empire must first become Papists, and then, emancipated or not, the parliament will, and ought to be Papist:—a Papist king? It cannot be, till parliament and people

are papist ; *then* so should the king—Papist judges and generals?—Why not ; if upright and skilful. Their talents we may employ, but their bigotry we cannot fear, till the king is Papist ; and in that event, however we now decide, there must be Papist generals and judges.

History is called in to deceive us, not to enlighten : to bear witness of the popish tyrants John and James—and to omit Harry and Charles. We forget, too, how we *did* subdue John and expel James, and would again the imitator of either. Every thing is forgotten, but passion and party, and a great nation wastes its strength and reputation in antiquated follies and differences about nothing.

XLVI. I conclude, that the Catholic lawyer, soldier, gentry, priesthood, and nobility, should be admitted to all the honours of their professions and ranks : That one torch of discord at least should be extinguished : That a nominal but degrading distinction should be abolished in a nation that fears the name of degradation, more even than the reality : That this should be done, because in politics *words are things*—because wisdom relieves real grievances, and policy, even

Ought to be granted.

the fictitious :—because evil cannot result from this good, or, if it can, is counterbalanced, or if not counter-balanced, may be remedied, as it has been before.

Trade, when free, finds its level. So will religion. The majority will no more persist—when it is not a point of *honour* to do so—in the worse faith than it would in the worse trade. Councils decide that the Confession of Augsburg is heresy ; and parliaments vote that Popery is superstition, and both impotently. No man will ever be converted, when his religion is also his party.

On conditions.

XLVII. But expedient as Catholic emancipation may be, I think it only expedient, and concede it, not without the following conditions :

1. That no violence be done to the constitution, by forcing from any of the three estates a reluctant consent. If obstacles arise, they must be surmounted by time, by patience, and by the law.

2. That the priesthood be Catholic, but not Popish :—paid by the state, approved by the

crown, and independent of all foreign controul.

3. That a wide and liberal system of national education be adopted by the legislature, and promoted by every sect.

4. Either that my former proposition concerning voters at elections be adopted, or that forty shillings freeholders* be disfranchised altogether, lest numerous ignorance overwhelm education and wealth.

But if, at last, this measure be found impracticable, others more important and effective may be carried. I have enumerated them; and I solemnly assert, as my most mature

* An English reader will hardly understand what is meant in Ireland by the designation of *forty shillings freeholder*. He is a peasant of the lowest class made a freeholder by his landlord for electioneering purposes.—The mode of making freeholders is, to grant the peasant his cottage, his garden, or his farm, by *lease*, for one, two, or three lives; this tenure for lives changes a *real leaseholder* into a *technical freeholder*. He swears that his tenement is worth 40s. a year, and thus acquires the *elective franchise*; which, in the mode in which it is exercised, would be better called the *elective servitude*. In general the landlord directs the votes of these poor creatures according to his own will; but instances have occurred, in which bigotry was stronger than interest, and the secret influence of the priests overbore the natural power of the landlord: but in whatever view the matter is considered, the 40s. freeholders are a political and moral abuse.

opinion, that without *them* Catholic emancipation would *not* tranquillize the country; and that they, without it, would. From those whom the penal laws would still affect we have nothing to fear: from those whom poverty, ignorance, and oppression brutalize, we have nothing to hope.

Defects of
the Go-
vernment.

XLVIII. 5. On the defects of the Government of Ireland, this is not a season to dilate. Some of them are inevitable, and the correction of the rest cannot be accelerated—may be retarded, by discussion: what in other times might assuage, would in ours inflame.

Three sources of danger may, I think, without increase of danger, be noticed.

1. A quicksand government, that swallows in its fluctuations every venture of reform. In seven years,* we have had four Chief Governors and

* Fifteen years have since elapsed, and have given Ireland four more Chief Governors, and five more Secretaries. It is worth while to record the names and dates of all since the Union. Lords Lieutenant—1801, Marquis Cornwallis, Earl of Hardwicke; 1805, Earl of Powis; 1806 Duke of Bedford; 1807, Duke of Richmond; 1813, Lord Whitworth; 1817, Earl Talbot; 1821, Marquis Wellesley.

Secretaries—1801, Lord Castlereagh, Mr. Abbot; 1802, Mr. Wickham; 1804, Sir E. Nepean; 1805, Mr. Vansittart, Mr. Long; 1806, Mr. Elliott; 1807, Sir A. Wellesley; 1809, Mr. Dundas, Mr. Pole; 1812, Mr. Peel; 1817, Mr. Grant; 1821, Mr. Goulbourn.

eight chief secretaries of different principles and parties, each stifling the abortive system of his predecessor by a system as abortive. What, in a few months, could they attain of information, or accomplish of reform?

With all their varied and various talents they were impotent; and years have elapsed and administrations reigned, without any change to Ireland but of years and administrations.

Do we think either that local knowledge is unnecessary to an Irish Minister, or that the King can confer it as he does a title?

Wavering is weakness—weakness in Ireland is wickedness. Leave with, or send to us, ministers, knowing us, whom we know: coolly planning—steadily executing: not a secretary with every season, and a system with every secretary.

2. Not to be forgotten is the madness or malice of parliamentary factions—surviving one senate—disturbing another; brandishing Ireland against the minister, not the enemy. She complains not less of the neglect of administrations, than of the notice of oppositions—their false friendship—their inflammatory pity—their hollow and hypocritical help.

3. But a more pressing danger impends from those who have as their object or pretence, the repeal of Union :* to many of the loyal an object ; to all the disaffected a pretence.

When the friend of Ireland, the partizan of France, and the enemy of England may coalesce, the coalition is alarming, however specious the pretext. Treason will shelter itself under its loyal associates, till it dare to cast them off. It will use and dupe them.

My opinion I have already delivered, that in our circumstances, the Union, whether good or evil, was inevitable. The present posture of politics strengthens that opinion. Whatever is not England, must be France.

Will those even who may dissent from this, dare to promise, that the repeal would place us where we originally stood ;—that popular commotion can be put under settlement ; that 1808 will stop short at the unsatisfactory and litigated boundary of 1782 ;—that the rebellions in Ireland, the revolutions in France, and the subversion of Europe, are without consequences physical or moral ?

* It is to be hoped that this danger is greatly diminished, if not altogether removed. The *Union* seems to *naturalize* itself in Ireland.

If any believe these things, they dream : *for* them there is the barest possibility, *against* them all the probabilities of reason and experience.

XLIX. Here I should conclude, but I dare not ; a solemn impression urges my pen. I have, perhaps, mistaken much—I have omitted much ; but that which I cannot mistake—cannot omit—is the novel and tremendous peril which surrounds us ; most tremendous, because its novelty does not seem to surprize, nor its terror to alarm. The sword and sceptre of Europe are in one hand.* Hosts more numerous than the Crusaders ; an empire more powerful than the Roman, talents and force, such as never before were united, all associated against us ! The boundaries, the thrones, the laws of nations are changed ; all is changed, and all still changes ; and every change is intended for our ruin. This is not our crime, it may even be our merit : but it is our crime, and our folly, and our danger, that we are not

* This danger is also vanished ; but the author does not think himself justified in omitting what formed so important a feature of his original view.

united to avert the ruin ; that our rulers are miserably squabbling about places, and our people disputing about dogmas. The instinct of brutes unites them in a common danger, the reason of man seems to render him an easier prey.

The ministry has exasperated the opposition, and the opposition the ministry. The Protestant is not blameless with regard to the Catholic, nor the Catholic with regard to the Protestant. England has not been guiltless towards Ireland, nor Ireland towards England. On all sides there is something to be forgiven, and great reason that it should be forgiven. If our internal discords aid the enemy, we shall soon have neither parties, religions, nor countries.

And let us not deceive ourselves ; all our united force against that enemy will not be superfluous. Let us not hope for external aid, for revolts among his tributaries, or rebellion in his empire : whilst he lives there will be neither ; the obedience of France he has insured by peace, and the submission of Europe by war : gratitude and fear will preserve quiet at home, while he

tries his fortune and his talents against his last and greatest enemy.

If we are unanimous I do not despair of the event : if we are not, a miracle only can save us ; our navies alone cannot—our armies cannot ; but our navies, and our armies, and union, and toleration in politics and religion, may : I dare not say they will ; but if England and Ireland are true to themselves, and to each other, either their triumph will renovate the world, or their fall leave in the world nothing worth living for.

Thoughts crowd on my mind, wishes on my heart, and words to my pen ; but to those who think I have said enough, and to those who feel, I am afraid to say more—

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Croker, John Wilson,

A sketch of the State of Ireland, past and present

Dublin 1822

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